

New Castle City Planning Commission Meeting
Minutes
June 25, 2018 -- 6:30 p.m.
City of New Castle Town Hall

Members Present: David Baldini, Chair
Brenda Antonio
William Walters
Gail Seitz
Russ Smith

Members Absent: Jonathan Justice, Vice Chair
Marco Boyce
Peter Toner
Vera Worthy

Mr. Baldini called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m. Roll call followed and a quorum was declared.

Minutes

Mr. Walters asked for clarification of when the University of Delaware Students presentation to the Commission would occur (*paragraph one, line three*). Mr. Baldini stated that the students' presentation was to have taken place at the May Planning Commission meeting; however since the May 2018 Meeting was cancelled, the presentation did not occur. The students did present to Commissioner Justice as class notes.

Mr. Walters referenced paragraph three, regarding the Bicycle Plan. He noted that Delaware Greenways has done a very comprehensive plan as it regards to New Castle County, and suggested that the Commission reach out to them for input for the Town's Bicycle Plan. Ms. Seitz attended a meeting during which the scope of developing a New Castle County Bike Plan was discussed. She advised that Delaware Greenways was represented at that meeting but WILMAPCO is coordinating it. She added that there were a number of organizations and municipality representatives at the meeting to develop the Plan and input from Delaware Greenways will be included. Mr. Baldini asked about Bike Delaware, and Ms. Seitz explained they were an advocacy group that is part of the group discussing the County Bike Plan.

There being no further comments or questions on the April 23, 2018, Minutes, a motion to approve the Minutes of the 4/23/18 Planning Commission Meeting as presented was made, seconded and approved.

2019 Comprehensive Plan

Mr. Baldini reviewed several topics that were sent to the Commissioners prior to the Meeting.

Annual Report – Mr. Baldini distributed a copy of the Comprehensive Plan Annual Report, noting that it reflects the work done on the Plan in the past year. It was presented by the Planner assisting the Commission and will be signed off on by the City. The Report shows what has been done in the past year relative to the Plan and contains the most current information.

Questionnaire – Mr. Baldini distributed data from the City that includes various activities and speaks to all of the items called out in the State Requirements for the Comprehensive Plan Update. Mr. Baldini will work with the City to gather all the data and will update the Comprehensive Plan. The Commissioners were encouraged to review the data and advise Mr. Baldini of any issues they felt the Planning Commission should focus on in the future. The data collected by the Commission will be forwarded to Mr. Barthel. Mr. Baldini will monitor the status in order to give the Commission adequate time to act on the issues. Ms. Seitz asked about the GIS Sheet File and Mr. Baldini explained it was the map with overlays. Ms. Seitz noted that one of the deficiencies in the existing Comprehensive Plan is future land use, and that zoning is about half complete. When the pre-Comprehensive Plan meeting was held with the State they recommended that the map be completed. Mr. Baldini noted that getting data input as soon as possible will assist the Commission in understanding the issues to be addressed and finding solutions.

Change in Scope – Mr. Baldini noted that KCI Technologies crossed out some items as being complete. He advised that Debbie Pheil and Lauren Good want to come to a meeting on August 27th, and that they are essentially combining Meetings 2, 3 and 4. Mr. Baldini noted that the Commission needs to make sure there is sufficient information for the August 27th meeting. Mr. Smith asked if KCI was done regarding their contract. Mr. Baldini advised KCI is done with regard to their involvement with the University of Delaware students' Public Involvement Plan, and they will not be involved in the detail of the Outreach Plan. Mr. Baldini also noted that a number of items sent by the Commission have not been addressed. Ms. Antonio asked if the Commission needed to prepare for the August 27th meeting, and Mr. Baldini concurred that there will be work the Commission will need to do through July and August. Ms. Seitz asked if the Commission has a completed Task Spreadsheet that assigns roles, noting that discussion of the Task Sheet is scheduled for Meeting #2 which is now scheduled for August 27th. Mr. Baldini advised the only Task Sheet he is aware of is the one he prepared and he will ask Ms. Pheil for clarification of that item.

WILMAPCO

Mr. Baldini reviewed the outcome of a meeting he and Ms. Seitz attended in November 2017 that was previously discussed at the April 23 Meeting. Mr. Baldini and Ms. Seitz will meet with WILMAPCO on Wednesday. They will look for their support in putting together the elements of the Transportation Section of the Comprehensive Plan, which will be expanded to include the Bicycle Path as well as any elements of the Transportation Cycle relevant to the Town in the next 10 years. There was also conversation of their participation in the community outreach. Ms. Seitz noted that in previous communications WILMAPCO indicated they would not lead the Outreach, but they would participate. Ms. Antonio clarified that the Transportation Section was a component of the Comprehensive Plan.

Capstone Project

Mr. Baldini distributed a deck of the work done by the University of Delaware students on the Public Involvement Plan and their work with KCI. He noted that the Plan they

submitted took various approaches to outreach and gave the pros and cons as well as some economics and costs at a very high level. They also included statistics, showing that of the surveys done, only 34 residents participated. Mr. Baldini noted that in looking at the surveys done for the Downtown Development, 3,000 surveys were sent out and only 300 residents responded. He asked for suggestions on how to get all of the communities involved. Ms. Seitz noted that the students' submission was based on questionnaires and surveys and did not include face-to-face meetings. Mr. Smith said it appeared the report devalued the effectiveness and efficiency of going out into the community as the best way to obtain feedback, but he felt that community workshops and meetings should also be held in order to ensure the residents felt included in the information-gathering process. Ms. Antonio added that different populations will respond to different types of information-gathering processes and that a variety of channels should be utilized. Mr. Smith noted that a hard copy of any online or internet survey should be made available.

During discussion, multiple forms of communication were reviewed. Mr. Baldini suggested using the Library as a central meeting place, sectioning off different breakout rooms for the various neighborhoods. Mr. Smith suggested that meetings for communities with a very strong sense of identity should be held in a those neighborhoods. During further discussion, it was noted that door-to-door canvassing, although very time-intensive, offers a unique opportunity to start significant conversations that might not be obtained at a community meeting or through an online survey. Ms. Seitz suggested that idea be discussed with WILMAPCO for their input, particularly regarding time spent vs. response rate.

Mr. Baldini asked for input on the issues that should be included in the survey. Ms. Seitz suggested that outside expert help be sought to create a survey that will provide optimum data. Mr. Baldini has requested data from the 2012 survey to use as a starting point noting that using the prior survey, current issues and potential future issues can be added. After a draft has been created, it will be submitted to KCI for review and recommendations of other items that should be addressed. Mr. Baldini reiterated that the detail of the questions is a prime concern in order to capture residents' true thoughts. Ms. Seitz suggested this also be discussed with WILMAPCO.

Mr. Baldini noted WILMAPCO's online surveys, public meetings and staff input has produced between a 67%-69% response rate. Ms. Antonio suggested that the residents may be unaware that a Comprehensive Plan exists, or that they have a say in what is in the Plan. Mr. Baldini added that should be part of the Outreach. During discussion various ways to bring the Plan to the publics' attention were reviewed. Mr. Walters suggested that an insert or article in the Weekly would be an opportunity to reach a large number of residents. Ms. Antonio questioned if there is a benchmark for doing a good job in reaching all residents.

Ms. Seitz and Mr. Baldini will meet with WILMAPCO and the information they receive will be sent to the Commissioners. In July, they will work on the details of the survey.

Mr. Walters asked what the circulation of the Weekly was. Ms. Terry Gormley advised the paper is planning on doing a series of articles on the various Commissions and the Trust, and felt it would be of significant value to write about the Planning Commission and the Comprehensive Plan. She suggested that the Commission update her on the purpose of the Plan. Mr. Walters stated the Weekly was an excellent resource in communicating the Comprehensive Plan to the residents and inviting them to attend meetings. Ms. Gormley reiterated that it would also be helpful to educate the public on the purpose of the Planning Commission and the Comprehensive Plan and how it impacts the community. Mr. Baldini asked for Ms. Gormley's assistance with communications on the Outreach Program.

New Issues

Mr. Smith noted that tourism is a key business in New Castle, and the last Comprehensive Plan only mentioned tourism as an issue with parking. He added that based on the last report on Economic Development and Tourism, it was clear that we don't know who our visitors are and what their economic impact is to the City. The State data does not provide any useful information on New Castle. He suggested data be gathered from other small towns that have primarily day visitors to determine the economic benefits and impacts they experience. He added that many residents are concerned about being overrun.

Mr. Baldini asked if the River Town Event had been cancelled. Ms. Gormley advised that it had been permanently cancelled; however, the Event really did not focus on the riverfront itself. Mr. Baldini felt losing that Event was significant in eliminating a happening that would draw visitors to the town. He added that visitors are potential business owners, residents, etc., and the Planning Commission should focus on ways to encourage visitation. Ms. Seitz noted that Louise Elliason's report addressed economic development and Mr. Smith added that the report was more tactical rather than strategic. Ms. Seitz also noted that the only tourism statistics available are from the Museum. Mr. Smith noted that there are formulas and models that can be used to interpret visitors' economic benefit to a community. Mr. Walters stated tourism is one of the top issues the Town faces and that it is a focus of the City Council as opposed to the Planning Commission. Ms. Antonio noted that a Council Session last year had different forums, and one of the topics was tourism and the future brand of the City. Ms. Seitz added that the current Comprehensive Plan has very little about economic development.

Public Comments

Theresa Gormley – Ms. Gormley asked if the New Castle County Bike Trail was part of the Trail from Maine to Florida. Ms. Seitz responded that the Bike Trail is part of the Greenways Trail, but the Bike Plan is specific to New Castle County. The New Castle County Trail includes, in part, Battery Park, the Wilmington/New Castle Trail (*formerly the Jack Markell Trail*) and the Mike Castle Trail. She added that at the meeting she attended regarding the Bicycle Plan, the Greenways Representative spoke about where there are gaps in the Trail and how to complete the Trail. Mr. Smith added that he thought the Maine to Florida Trail was the Bike Rte. 1 Trail.

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
February 26, 2018

Ms. Gormely noted that a Town Calendar was referenced in Louise Elliason's Report, and that she had been tasked with creating a Town Calendar. She asked if the Commission was working on a Calendar. Ms. Seitz explained that the Commission was not working on a Calendar, but data on specific organizations and annual events that take place throughout the City was available. That data will be provided to Ms. Gormely to assist in her creation of a Town Calendar.

Rod Miller – 124 East 3rd Street

Mr. Miller explained that he moved to New Castle from Salem, New Jersey, and that he was very interested in historical buildings and events. When he lived in Salem, New Jersey, he became interested in preservation and sale of the historic buildings in Salem. He discovered the National Preservation Historic Trust (NPHT) website, a non-profit out of Washington, DC. One of the functions of the site is to provide a national forum to advertise the sale of historic homes. He explained that he contacted Abigail Horrigan of the NPHT and as a result of their discussion Salem received a \$500 Grant to be used to advertise historic homes for sale in Salem on the NPHT website.

He suggested that there were historic websites that might be available to advertise events taking place in New Castle in order to promote tourism. Mr. Smith suggested Mr. Miller contact Laura Fontanae, President of the New Castle Community Partnership (NCCP), noting it was likely the strongest local organization to which this information could be presented. Mr. Miller was aware of the NCCP, but thought the Planning Commission might be another avenue to disseminate information to the residents. Ms. Gormley added that manpower to input the data was an issue.

The Commission thanked Mr. Miller for his input

There being no further business, a Motion to adjourn the Meeting was made and seconded. The Motion was carried and the Meeting was adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

Kathy Weirich
Stenographer